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UNCLAS CANBERRA 000626

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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: AUSTRALIA WEIGHING COUNTERNARCOTIC CONTRIBUTION TO AFGHANISTAN

REF: STATE 58810

1. (U) After coordinating with UK counterparts, we delivered reftel points and nonpaper on April 1 to Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) Afghanistan Program Director Carmel Ryan and Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) Afghanistan Section Director Peter Howarth. Ryan noted that she would be attending the April 4-6 Afghanistan Development Conference to learn more about how the Afghanistan Counter Narcotics Trust Fund (ACNTF) would be implemented. She said that the GOA supported the British letter and proposal and that Foreign Minister Downer would make a decision on when Australia could contribute funding by the end of April. Ryan indicated the GOA would respond to Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs Jack

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Straw's letter upon her return. She promised to provide us with an update on the GOA's funding plans in late April.

2. (U) Prior to the meeting with Ryan and Howarth, we discussed with British High Commission External Affairs Officer Jackie Richards her own conversations with the Australians regarding the ACNTF. Richards said she had delivered the letter from Secretary Straw March 14. Richards said the GOA had expressed support for the ACNTF in principle, but she thought it unlikely that Australia would have sufficient resources to support the British request. (Note: Australia pledged an unprecedented A\$1 billion -- US\$800 million -- to Indonesia in the wake of the December 26 tsunami, and thus its ODA resources are particularly

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stretched at the moment.) Richards thanked Poloff for the U.S.'s support of the UK's message.

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